

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS**

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

ENVIRONMENTAL RECOMMENDATIONS IN DOCKET NO. AB 290 (Sub-No. 323X)

April 26, 2011

ABANDONMENT TYPE

The time for comments on the Environmental Assessment (EA) has expired in this:

☒ (X) Notice of Exemption ☐ () Petition for Exemption ☐ () Regulated Abandonment

☒ (X) NO NEW COMMENTS WERE RECEIVED

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OEA served an Environmental Assessment (EA) for this proceeding on April 8, 2011 for public review and comment. In the EA, OEA recommended 3 environmental conditions and concluded that the proposed action would not significantly impact the quality of the human environment. The EA comment period has ended, and no new comments were received.

Modifications to the EA

Upon further independent review, OEA believes that condition Number 1 in the EA (regarding consultation with the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources' Office of Coastal Management) should be modified to make clear that the railroad cannot initiate salvage activities or consummate the abandonment prior to its compliance with the stipulations of the condition. Accordingly, we recommend the following modified condition:

Pursuant to the Coastal Zone Management Act (16 U.S.C. § 1451 et seq.) and the Board's environmental regulations at 49 C.F.R. § 1105.9, Alabama Great Southern Railway Company (AGS) shall consult with the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources' Office of Coastal Management and obtain state coastal management consistency certification. AGS may not file its consummation notice or initiate any salvage activities related to abandonment (including removal of tracks and ties) until it reports the results of these consultations in writing to the Board's Office of Environmental Analysis and the Board has removed this condition.

Conclusions

As explained above, OEA recommends that the conditions recommended in the EA, as modified by the recommendations in this document, be imposed upon any decision granting abandonment authority. The conditions are:

1. Pursuant to the Coastal Zone Management Act (16 U.S.C. § 1451 et seq.) and the Board's environmental regulations at 49 C.F.R. § 1105.9, Alabama Great Southern Railway Company (AGS) shall consult with the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources' Office of Coastal Management and obtain state coastal management consistency certification. AGS may not file its consummation notice or initiate any salvage activities related to abandonment (including removal of tracks and ties) until it reports the results of these consultations in writing to the Board's Office of Environmental Analysis and the Board has removed this condition.
2. Based on the comments of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Alabama Great Southern Railway Company shall follow best management practices during salvage activities to prevent erosion.
3. Prior to commencement of any salvage activities, Alabama Great Southern Railway Company (AGS) shall consult with Saint Bernard Parish regarding potential impacts to federal flood control structures and, if applicable, comply with any reasonable requirements. AGS shall report the results of these consultations in writing to the Board's Office of Environmental Analysis prior to the onset of salvage operations.

If the above conditions are imposed, OEA believes that the proposed action will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment.

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